

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WM. LACY CLAY
Before the
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development
“The Section 8 Housing Assistance Program: Promoting Decent Affordable Housing for
Families and Individuals Who Rent”
June 17, 2003

GOOD AFTERNOON MR. CHAIRMAN, RANKING MEMBER WATERS,
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, AND WITNESSES.

I STATE AGAIN AND EMPHATICALLY THAT SECTION 8 VOUCHERS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY AND ARE PROPOSED TO BE PLACED IN A VOUCHER GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE STATES IN 2005 AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IS WILL WORK. WHEN WE CONSIDER THE DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS MOST STATES ARE IN, AT THE PRESENT, WITH NO RELIEF IN SIGHT, IT WOULD BE A DISASTER TO PLACE SECTION 8 VOUCHERS IN BLOCK GRANTS. STATES WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE THAN TO ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING FOR SHORTFALLS IN OTHER AREAS.

WHY ARE WE GOING TO TAKE A SUCESSFUL PROGRAM, SEND IT TO THE STATES AND CREATE ASTRONOMICAL PROBLEMS FOR SYSTEMS THAT ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO STREAMLINE VOUCHER ADMINISTRATION? THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO REFORM THE PROGRAM. THE ANSWER TO EVERY PROBLEM IN GOVERNMENT ISN'T TO SEND THE PROGRAM TO THE STATES OR PRIVATIZE IT. THE PROGRAM IS FAR FROM PERFECT; HOWEVER, IT IS WORKABLE AND, WITH IMPROVEMENTS, WILL PERFORM EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY FROM THE FEDERAL LEVEL.

THERE IS NOT A BENEFIT FOR THE LOW INCOME VOUCHER RECIPIENTS OR FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE VOUCHER RECIPIENTS BY SENDING THE PROGRAM TO THE STATES IN THE FORM OF BLOCK GRANTS. WHAT FEATURES ARE THERE IN A BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM THAT WOULD IMPROVE ADMINISTERING THE SECTION 8 PROGRAMS TO CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES? WHAT NEW LIMITATIONS WOULD BE INSTITUTED INTO THE RULES BY STATES WHEN ADMINISTRATING THE PROGRAM? THERE ARE TOO MANY UNCERTAINTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PARTICULAR, PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE SECTION 8 VOUCHER PROGRAM.

BLOCKS GRANTS HISTORICALLY HAVE A TENDENCY TO HAVE FUNDING LEVELS DROP OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS. THIS PROGRAM CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE A CUT IN FUNDING FOR ANY REASON. IF ANYTHING, IT NEEDS AN INCREASE. WE HAVE NOT APPROCHED A REMEDY FOR THE HOUSING PROBLEM THAT IS A CURE ALL. PUTTING SECTION 8 FUNDS IN

BLOCK GRANTS TO STATES IS CERTAINLY NOT A REMEDY OR A CURE FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE PROGRAM.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I ASK UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO SUBMIT MY STATEMENT TO THE RECORD.